

SOME SYNONYMY IN *DERMESTES* (COLEOPTERA).

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Certain old names of beetles are continued in use through habit although prior valid and available names for the same species are listed in synonymy, in violation of the principles of the Code and to the discredit of our work and its objective. Impersonal application of evidence is a basic necessity in attempts to assemble and classify the facts in indexes to economic insects. These accumulated indexes are very extensive but they are only a beginning for a much better and more necessary service, and it behooves us to perfect our method and to reduce the element of personal preference among the great number of cooperating international contributors as to the names we use for species. For nearly half a century the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature have helped to reduce conflicting application of names by local groups but even the law of priority has been opposed by certain workers who object to the adoption of a name, unfamiliar to them, for a species which they have known under some later synonym or misapplied name. Preference for the work of a certain early author can scarcely be accepted as reason for choice of a name, and the contributions by the great Fabricius lose little of their merit by recognition of the excellent work by DeGeer which preceded them but which was unknown to Fabricius in 1775. Even recently compiled handbooks on national or local faunae have continued the misuse of specific names as they were adopted by the disciples of Fabricius. As examples of such misuse may be mentioned *Byturus fumatus* auct. (not Linné, not Fabricius) and *B. tomentosus* auct. (not Fabricius 1775, but DeGeer 1774, although not so cited), as recently discussed elsewhere (U. S. Dept. Agr. Misc. Pub. 468).

The present note considers two destructive species of *Dermestes* which may have been dispersed by commerce from their original homes and become cosmopolitan pests long before they were recognized by taxonomy. Both species had been given valid names by DeGeer before Fabricius proposed different names for them, but the writer and others have been compelled to call them by these commonly used synonyms because the confusion of synonymy in catalogs still follows usage resulting from the great personal prestige of Fabricius, and the prior correct names would have been unintelligible to others. The long-used name of a third species is a primary homonym without an available substitute, and for this European species a new name is proposed. Although many other corrections

will be required in the catalog of Dermestidae by Dalla Torre 1911 (Junk, *Coleopt. Cat.*, pt. 33), the synonymy there given for these species should now be revised as indicated below. The usual citations being already available in the catalog, the names are here given merely by author and date.

*Dermestes ater* DeGeer 1774; type locality, Surinam.

Syn. *Dermestes cadaverinus* Fabricius 1775; type locality, St. Helena.

Syn. *Dermestes piceus* Thunberg 1781; type locality, Cape of Good Hope.

Syn. *Dermestes felinus* Fabricius 1787 (fide Arrow 1915); type locality, Tasmania.

Syn. *Dermestes subcostatus* Murray 1867 (fide Arrow 1915); type locality, Old Calabar.

That this species probably originated in the Orient is not evident from the records. Its cosmopolitan distribution may have become complete before taxonomic discrimination developed. The frequency of its interception in commercial shipments in recent years is in contrast to its apparent rarity in our country in earlier decades. Schoenherr 1808 (*Syn. Ins.*, vol. 1, p. 90) suppressed the two prior names *Dermestes piceus* Thunberg 1781 and *D. ater* DeGeer 1774 as synonyms of the subsequent name *D. felinus* Fabricius 1787. This inverted synonymy has been copied by Gemminger and Harold 1868 (*Cat. Coleopt.*, vol. 3, p. 913) and Dalla Torre 1911 (*Junk, Coleopt. Cat.*, pt. 33, p. 43), but Arrow 1915 (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, ser. 8, vol. 15, p. 426) found that the types of both *felinus* Fabricius and *subcostatus* Murray belonged to the species which he knew under the name *cadaverinus*. This species should be known by its prior name, *D. ater* DeGeer, according to the evidence thus far found.

***Dermestes olivieri* Barber, new name—**

for *D. ater* Olivier 1790 (not DeGeer 1774); type locality, Paris.

The "stillborn" homonym proposed by Olivier 1790 (*Ent.*, vol. 2, no. 9, p. 9, pl. 2, fig. 12) has continued in use for a century and a half without an available synonym which can properly take its place. This species is therefore renamed in honor of its original describer, although unfortunately it is not identified in the material in the National Collection. Citations to fourteen publications are listed under this homonym by Dalla Torre 1911 (*Junk, Coleopt. Cat.*, pt. 33, p. 40).

*Dermestes maculatus* DeGeer 1774; type locality, Surinam.

Syn. *Dermestes vulpinus* Fabricius 1781; type locality, Cape of Good Hope.

Syn. "*Dermestes elongatus* Hope," Arrow 1915 (not Linné 1761); type locality, Egypt.

This is the cosmopolitan "hide beetle," the original home of which is unknown. *Dermestes vulpinus* was listed in 1825 (Trans. Linnæan Soc., London, vol. 14, p. 602) as having been found in the body of an Egyptian mummy at Thebes, and "*elongatus* Hope" is recorded from the same source. Arrow 1915 (Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 8, vol. 15, p. 426) thought he had studied the "type" of "*D. elongatus* Hope" and that it was *D. vulpinus* F., but Hope did not describe such a species in the volume cited in the Munich and Junk catalogs. Besides being a *nomen nudum*, the name is preoccupied by Linné 1761. These records are not conclusive, and reidentifications of the old specimens or new evidence from infestations of similar ancient burials might assign these pests in early Mediterranean civilization to other species. The Fabrician name *vulpinus* has been continuously used in spite of the fact that its synonymy with *maculatus* DeGeer was recognized by Illiger 1798 (Verzeich. Käfer Preuss., p. 314), Gyllenhal 1808 (Ins. Svec., vol. 1, p. 147), Schoenherr 1808 (Syn. Ins., vol. 1, p. 90), Gemminger and Harold 1868 (Cat. Coleopt., p. 915), and Dalla Torre 1911 (Junk, Coleopt. Cat., pt. 33, p. 50), but all these workers have adopted the Fabrician synonym and suppressed the prior name, which we should use, *Dermestes maculatus* DeGeer.

*Dermestes nidum* Arrow 1915

Syn. *Dermestes elongatus* LeConte 1854 (not Linné 1761); type locality, Georgia.

Syn. *Dermestes elongatus* LeConte, Barber 1914.

"*Dermestes elongatus* Hope," accepted as valid by Gemminger and Harold 1868, Dalla Torre 1911, and Arrow 1915, is a *nomen nudum*, there being no description or figure associated with Hope's name in Pettigrew's History of Egyptian Mummies. *D. elongatus* LeConte 1854 is, however, preoccupied by Linné 1761 for a species now placed in the ostomid genus *Nemosoma*. Arrow 1915 chose the substitute name *nidum* because this rarely-found indigenous species had just been reared by the writer from larvae infesting occupied nests of the black-crowned night heron in the same colony near Washington, D. C., which had been infested the previous year (see Barber 1914, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, vol. 27, p. 146).